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ABSTRACT

In examining the sexual structuring of employment in public education from 1840 to 1980, the following social phenomenon are discussed: (1) socially accepted attitudes on the role of women in the early part of the nineteenth century; (2) the structure of schooling and cultural emphasis upon the "natural" abilities of women to instruct young children; (3) the emergence of male teachers, the reasons they were attracted to teaching, and the reasons they tended to move from teaching to either school administration or other careers; (4) the gradual shift from rural to urban schooling and its impact upon the roles of men and women in the schools; (5) the rationale for paying men teachers more than women teachers; (6) the organization of the school systems and the resemblance of these systems to concurrently rising industrial structures; (7) the impact of the patriarchal society of mid-nineteenth century American thinking and the resulting assumption that women teachers would follow the lead of male supervisors; (8) the differences in life style and behavior patterns imposed by society upon men and women; (9) the impact of World War II on opportunities for both sexes; (10) how shifting cultural values have changed role patterns for both sexes; and (11) the rise of teacher organizations and unions and how they are changing the power structure in education. (JD)

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WOMEN AND MEN IN THE SCHOOLS: A HISTORY OF THE SEXUAL STRUCTURING OF EDUCATIONAL EMPLOYMENT*

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I

In this report we ask: How and why did women enter public school teaching? Why did men remain in public education as teachers in the upper grades and as managers even after elementary teaching became almost a female monopoly? What impact did the sex composition of teaching have on the occupation and on the school as a social organization? How much has sexual asymmetry changed since 1940, and what are the prospects for the future?

We raise the questions in this way because we believe that gender offers one of the fundamental ways in which people organize social reality, as important a category of analysis as class or race or age. To know the sex of a typical child in past or present is already to know much about how that person would be likely to participate in the sexual structuring of power, prestige, and opportunity and how she or he would be shaped by cultural norms of behavior. In describing gender as a fundamental organizing principle of society we do not subscribe either to the genetic determinism of some sociobiologists or to the voluntaristic optimism of some social psychologists who think that the differences between men and women result from "roles" that can be changed like a script in a play by reforming early socialization or by training women to be more assertive. We see the sexual structuring of society as something more tractable than genes and more resistant to reform than roles. We see differentiation by sex as deeply embedded in the history of male and female participation in the economy, in changes in cultural norms for women's behavior, in the development of the family, and in the evolution of other social organizations such as schools.[1]

The sexual structuring of society is so pervasive -- cutting across divisions of class, race and age -- that it has often been taken for granted or deliberately slighted by those who stood to benefit from existing arrangements. In recent years, however, many scholars have attempted to reconceptualize American history by attending to gender. Labor economists have studied how and why women have been and are segregated to a large degree in the workforce and why they, like blacks, have tended over time to earn only about three-fifths of the wages of white males. They have explored why the demand for women in sex-labeled jobs has increased and how employers have dipped at critical junctures into different segments of the massive reserve pool of workers represented by women, both single and married.[2] Recently, social historians and sociologists have disputed the traditional separation of scholarly study of the family and the workplace, and they have insisted that women's work in the market economy must be linked to changes in family, demography, and life-cycle, not treated as a separate world.[3] Cultural historians have illuminated how the nineteenth century doctrine of domesticity drew boundaries around "woman's sphere" and justified limited female participation in work and public life outside the family. Such cultural belief systems help to explain the connections between family and women's work and the configurations of opportunity and exclusion in employment for women.[4] Although artifacts of society at particular times and places, these beliefs and behavior patterns carried great authority, for, as Erving Goffman writes, "gender, in close connection with age grade, lays down more, perhaps, than class or other social divisions an understanding of what our ultimate nature ought to be and how and where this nature ought to be exhibited."[5]

In this report we examine the sexual structuring of employment in public education, focusing especially on the years from 1840 to 1980. We have drawn on the work of economists, sociologists and historians in an attempt to achieve an interdisciplinary understanding of this phenomenon. We seek to link together into an integrated argument four major factors: labor supply and demand forces, cultural values, organizational changes, and changes in the family. We see these influences not as single parsimonious explanations, nor as competing hypotheses, but as interpretations that nest, like Chinese cups, one within another. We concentrate primarily on the argument that seeks to integrate these different kinds of explanations.

It would be easy to conclude that it was somehow "inevitable" that public school teaching became largely women's work while males continued to manage the enterprise, yet we dissent from this way of taking it for granted. During the colonial period, men dominated teaching in public institutions (the definition of "public," it should be pointed out, was far more comprehensive than at present, including many institutions that today would be called "private"). Well into the twentieth century men continued to dominate teaching at all levels in certain other nations -- Prussia, for example. Beginning in the urbanized Northeast, women began to become a majority of teachers in public schools in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. By 1870, when national statistics were available for the first time, about 60 percent of teachers nationwide were female. The percentage of women slowly increased to 70 percent in 1900

and then to a peak of 86 percent in 1920. Thereafter the percentage of men increased gradually, accelerating during the Depression of the 1930s but dropping again during World War II. Since World II, the proportion of women in public school teaching has dropped; in 1978, they constituted about two-thirds of all public school teachers.[6] Thus, there has been considerable fluctuation in the sexual composition of the teaching force.

These nationwide figures mask, moreover, important regional and rural-urban variations. In 1870, for example, men were still a majority of teachers in 26 states. Urban Washington, D.C., had a teaching force that was 92 percent female, while adjacent Virginia had men in 65 percent of its teaching positions. In 1880 in California, woman were 66 percent of all public school personnel (including principals), but in San Francisco they made up 92 percent of all public school personnel. Another source of variability in sex composition was the level at which teachers taught; women tended to monopolize the primary grades, while men appeared most frequently in the upper grades and the high schools.[7]

Thus we see the sexual composition of teaching, not as some ineluctable and unilinear evolution, but as a set of historical puzzles. How and why did women enter public school teaching in the nineteenth century? What were the sources of the variability in the sex ratio? Why did men persist as teachers even though they cost more than women? And why did men continue nearly to monopolize key administrative positions? Why did the proportion of males increase after World War II at all levels of the system? As the sex composition of educational employment has changed and changed again, what have been the impacts on the occupation and on the school as

a social organization? What effects has gender had on the development of professional associations? In this essay we suggest some tentative answers to these questions.

II

We begin with an examination of some macro forces: supply and demand in the labor market for teachers and some concurrent changes in cultural values affecting the employment of women as teachers. Throughout most periods of American history there has been a strong demand for teachers. This has resulted from a combination of factors: a large increase in the absolute numbers of children and youth of school age; a rise in the percentage of pupils enrolled and of their average daily attendance; steady extensions of the length of the school term; very high turnover of teachers, especially in rural areas; and an overall decrease in class size. Until well into the twentieth century the people who hired teachers did not set high educational standards, but they typically required only that instructors be literate and reasonably well versed in the 3Rs, of certified moral character (as determined by community standards and often attested to by letters of reference), normally of native birth, and generally possessing middle-class appearance and habits. Save for a few positions in the cities -- typically occupied by males -- employers sought only people willing to accept low wages.[8]

On the supply side, where could such a labor force be found? In an economy characterized by abundant land in the West, expanding commercial and industrial opportunities in cities, and careers opening up in the professions, mature males could generally find other occupations that paid more than teaching and offered much greater long-term advancement. Young men, especially during the winter in rural communities, would sometimes be interested in teaching for a short term, generally as a stepping stone to something else. College students working their way through school or farmers' sons, for example, might find even low pay attractive for a few weeks' work. We shall explore these and other motivations of male teachers later in this essay.

School board members did not usually want, however, to dip down into the social structure to hire mature men of lower status -- Irish Catholic immigrants, for example, in New England -- even though the wage scale in teaching was often on a level with that of casual laborers who dug the canals and built the railroads. They wanted to pay proletarian wages, yet keep teaching a white-collar occupation. Where could school boards turn to staff the burgeoning common schools of the 1840s and the 1850s? One place to look was among the growing reserve labor pool of literate, middle class, single young women.[9]

From the beginning of American history women had always taught young children, sometimes only in their own families and sometimes in "dame schools" in which married or single women conducted small classes in homes to teach ABCs to boys and girls under about seven years. Through a long and complex process females gained access first as students and then as teachers to tax supported or private schools held outside the home. By

the end of the eighteenth century young women began to be hired to teach little children during the summer term of the one-room schools near their homes. The transition from dame school held in the home to one-room school was a slight step, but a significant one. The "cellular" character of American elementary education, in which a single teacher instructs a group of children in the 3Rs all day within the walls of a single room, continues to reflect something of its early origins. The one-room school resembled in some ways the family farm. As girls gained access to formal schooling, the literacy of women rose rapidly from the late colonial period to the mid-nineteenth century, especially in the North. This created a population of young women qualified by education and moral character to serve as school teachers.[10]

Pioneers in women's education like Emma Willard, Catharine Beecher, and Mary Lyon publicized a rationale for training young women specifically as teachers and for hiring them to replace men, an argument that was later voiced by common school crusaders like Horace Mann and Henry Barnard. They claimed that women were by nature and God's design the ideal teachers of little children: nurturant, patient, able to understand young minds, and exemplary in their moral influence on the rising generation. To these promoters teaching served the millennial dream of a Protestant-republican society, one in which women teachers could be missionaries of civilization. Recognizing how powerful was the "cult of true womanhood" -- indeed, promoting it -- they did not argue that women should be teachers instead of being mothers. Rather, they argued that teaching prepared women to be better mothers and that it was but a step from the parental home to the schoolhouse and then back again to the conjugal home as wife and mother. Endorsing the notion of a special sphere for women, the pioneer educators

enlarged the domestic sphere to include the school -- and thereby helped to create a market for the graduates of their seminaries. Besides, as they were quick to add, women were considerably cheaper to hire than were men.[11]

While public and private schools were opening to females as students and teachers, and as spokespeople were developing a rationale for employing women, concurrent changes in the family economy in New England and in the life cycle of young women further promoted the feminization of teaching. In the years following the American Revolution daughters in farm families were adding cash income to the family economy in a variety of ways. At home they were beginning to do piece work -- braiding straw hats, sewing uppers of shoes, spinning cloth, and the like -- for commercial capitalists who provided raw materials and paid families for finished goods. When cotton mill owners sought young women to work as operatives, daughters of farmers went to towns on the Merrimac River and worked and lived together in supervised boarding houses. Some worked as domestics in other people's houses. And increasing numbers worked as teachers, often alternating mill work with instructing in country schools. They were excluded from most other jobs, which were reserved for men.[12]

Teaching was thus only one way in which young women were beginning to take part in the market economy, working for cash in the putting-out system of mercantile capitalism or directly for wages in a nascent industrial society. As David Allmendinger and Thomas Dublin have shown, teaching and factory work enabled young women to contribute to the family economy or achieve some economic independence while awaiting marriage -- or indeed, to be self-supporting in case they remained single.[13] It is

not accidental that school teaching first became feminized in the Northeast, where industrial capitalism first began its take-off into sustained growth. There the factory system replaced certain portions of traditional household work, thereby lessening the need for domestic services of daughters. Women began to work for wages outside the home. And finally, an imbalance in the sex ratio created a pool of available educated female workers in some communities.[14]

Thus far the reasoning seems uncomplicated. Women were hired because there was high demand for literate and moral teachers at cheap prices, because teaching came to be seen as a legitimate part of women's sphere, and because women would work at lower wages than men. By this reasoning one might expect that women would over time have become 100 percent of public school teachers or that men would have been hired only if they agreed to serve at the same wages as those paid to women. Both of these expectations, however, proved false.[15] Men did remain in teaching, and within any particular labor market they received higher salaries than those paid to women. Indeed, the story becomes more complex the closer one looks at it. Women teachers in city systems generally earned more per month than men in rural school systems. States that spent the most per pupil for schools typically had the largest ratio of women teachers (in 1870 the zero-order correlation between expenditures per pupil and the percentage of female teachers, by state, was .67). It is by no means clear what is the causal direction -- if any -- between this association of high costs and feminization. Finally, the most telling variable is the gap between male and female salaries, not the absolute values; where the gap was greatest in the female/male salary ratio, there one found the largest percent of women teachers.

One place to start in unraveling this complex story is to ask: Where were the male teachers? During the latter nineteenth century they constituted about 30 percent of all public school teachers. Male teachers appeared in largest numbers in rural schools where salaries were low, school terms short, professional requirements meager, and the gap in female/male salaries the smallest -- in short, where they cost the least. The regions that had the largest percentage of males were also the most backward in educational development, the South and Southwest.[16]

To understand the variability in the sexual composition of the labor force in teaching, it is essential to shift to a different kind of analysis, to ask how and why urban and rural school districts tended to operate as different labor markets, each split by gender. We thus turn to the organizational character of urban and rural schools and their relation to their surrounding communities, aware that in the century from 1870 to 1970 there was a gradual convergence between schools in cities and countryside and a lagged regional drift toward greater standardization.

III

Arthur Stinchcombe has observed that institutions continue to reflect the organizational structure they displayed at the time of their founding.[17] Thus construction crafts like carpentry or bricklaying, for example, which are very old, tend to be organized quite differently from modern production-line factories. So it was with rural and urban schools. The country school reflected in its structure and functioning the freehold family farms that typically constituted its environment. Until the

20th century few rural teachers had more than an elementary school education. Teachers were typically local young people in their late teens or early twenties, often selected by school trustees from among their own relatives. Teachers' wages were often seen as spoils of trustees' office, a way to recoup taxes for the family income.[18] In the school a young man (brother) or woman (sister) supervised a small number of children (often no more than ten) of different ages drawn from the immediate neighborhood. Roles in the school were more familial than bureaucratic; organization was flexible. Older children were expected to help the younger ones while the teacher supervised recitations. Often parents and other patrons gathered to hear what the children had learned or to witness a spelling bee. In many parts of the country teachers went house to house to "board 'round," eating and sleeping at the homes of the parents of the pupils.[19]

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, the rural school was the modal public school. In 1880 over 77 percent of Americans lived in rural areas, yet only 46.7 percent of public school funds were spent on rural schools.[20] Except in the heavily urbanized states, the rural schools were open generally less than half as many days as the city schools. As late as 1919 Nebraska school law required districts of fewer than 20 pupils to be open only four months, whereas districts with over 75 students had to be in session for nine months.[21] Even short rural school years were often divided into two or three separate terms, often with different teachers. Typically, the school calendar was designed to match the need for the labor of children -- and teachers -- on the farm.

The hiring of a teacher in these rural areas approximated a free competitive market in which the model for school trustees was probably

hiring a hand to work on the farm or a young woman as house helper. They wanted to economize and to get the most productivity for the least money. Often when the state funds ran out after a few weeks, the parents chipped in private tuition to pay the teacher for a longer term. A Georgia county superintendent said that patrons paid teachers according to their assessment of the merit of the teachers "just as a person might be employed by a private individual."[22] Under such conditions of an open market, in which entry requirements were low, trustees bargained with women and men for their services. Cost was clearly a very important factor in the trustees' decisions about whom to hire, but so, also, were their preconceptions about sex-linked abilities. Where school terms were split into summer and winter sessions, with young children in the summertime, trustees commonly hired women as appropriate teachers in the summer months. During the winter term, however, when older boys entered the school in large numbers (for rural schools tended to have a wide age range in enrollment), trustees often preferred men as teachers because they considered them better disciplinarians and more competent in teaching male youth. Thus they were willing to pay a small salary premium to obtain their services.

Over time, however, as women showed that they could succeed in teaching older children and as fewer men began to apply (for reasons we shall examine), women gradually replaced men in country schools. During much of the nineteenth century in certain rural sectors of the country, teaching in the winter term in country schools was not clearly sex-labeled as an occupation.[23]

What were the reasons why both men and women wanted to enter this labor market? Women had few alternative occupations. They could work in their own or neighbors' homes, but unlike the young men, they could not so easily migrate to cities or to new land opening up in the west, for custom dictated that they live in established families. For young women awaiting marriage, teaching was thus an attractive opportunity to earn cash in a farm economy where such jobs were rare. Such income was a welcome addition to the family economy when daughters lived at home and sometimes permitted young women to earn a dowry. In addition, it was a respectable occupation which gave her a certain visibility as a possible marriage partner, as well as an opportunity for sociability in lonely dispersed settlements. The marriageable school marm became a staple of American fiction, particularly westerns.[24]

Men, by contrast, had more opportunities to move away from farm communities or to perform alternative rural work such as lumbering or trapping or construction during the off-season. But teaching a short term in a country school had an appeal for males as well as females. It was one of the very few non-manual jobs available, it provided cash income, and it was a useful stepping stone for a person eager to establish himself in the community. If a young man wanted to get started as a minister, politician, shopkeeper, or lawyer, a position as schoolmaster gave him visibility. He could also easily combine teaching in a winter term with farming his own homestead the rest of the year. The job required almost no preparation, took only a few weeks out of the year, and had low opportunity costs.[25]

However, when rural school terms lengthened and were combined into a continuous year and when standards for certification rose, women began to replace men as teachers. Rural wages in teaching did not rise substantially, and even for a full year teaching term of six to eight months, the salary was barely sufficient to support one person, much less a family. Pay for teaching was still attractive, however, to a woman living at home or inexpensively as boarder in a farm family. But for a man the long school term and the higher entry costs (new laws required certification or attendance at teachers' institutes) were greater barriers. He could no longer teach a few weeks for cash and then pursue another job as his primary occupation. Interrupting other activities to attend a summer teachers' institute or to bone up for a county examination seemed not worth the effort, if measured against alternative uses of his time and money. In Wisconsin, in 1902, rural teachers estimated the direct costs of institutes, books and other professionally related expenses as almost one month's salary.[26] As the school term lengthened and professional requirements increased in Nebraska, male teachers dropped from a majority in 1870 to only about 12 percent in 1910. By 1920 there were only eight states with more than 20 percent male teachers, only one with more than 30 percent; these were predominantly rural states with relatively short terms and scanty bureaucratic controls.[27]

In effect, the longer terms and increased standards for entry turned teaching into a para-profession, as Thomas Morain observed in his study of the feminization of teaching in rural Iowa. A little "professionalization" of this sort drove men out of teaching, for it increased the opportunity costs without resulting in commensurate increases in pay. By

contrast, professionalization of more lucrative and prestigious fields like medicine or law -- including the upgrading of training programs and licensing requirements -- tended to drive women out of those occupations, sometimes by deliberate quotas in male-dominated graduate schools.[28]

IV

While technically a part of the same "common school system" as the rural schools, urban public schools were quite different structurally and constituted in many respects a different labor market. The school year in the city was often double what it was in poor and sparsely-settled rural areas. In 1880, for example, in 32 of the 38 states, urban schools were open over 180 days and in 25 states more than 190 days, compared with a nationwide average of 130 days. That year cities spent $12.62 per capita on education compared with only $3.28 in rural areas. According to Lewis Solmon, the foregone earnings of pupils in the city were vastly greater than those of rural youth since the long school term and different employment patterns in urban economies meant that it was not so easy to do seasonal work as it was on the farm. Teaching in cities typically paid from two to three times higher salaries than in the countryside.[29] Because of the long term, it was normally the teacher's only occupation.

Although there was some individual bargaining over wages with school board members or the superintendent, it became more and more common for cities to set uniform salary schedules for men and women at the different levels of the system (sometimes by grade of certificate and by years of

experience). City teachers typically were considerably older, better educated, and more experienced than those in the country. A large proportion of them had attended a city normal school. Most important, for our purposes, was a strong emerging sexual pattern of employment in city schools: Women outnumbered men by about ten to one, and women taught in the lower grades while the men worked in the higher grades and as managers.[30]

The sex segregation of women in the lower rungs of urban school bureaucracies was not simply an unplanned result of inevitable economic and cultural forces, though those larger forces obviously played an important part. It was also the result of a deliberate policy adopted at the birth of a very important organizational invention: the graded school. From the beginning of that institution -- which many trace to the Quincy School in Boston in 1847 -- promoters of the graded school argued that women should be the primary teachers while men should be retained as principals or superintendents. They used the familiar arguments about women's superior understanding of small children and their cheaper wages but added to these the claim that women would also be more willing to follow the direction of their superiors. It was no easy matter to bureaucratize the older urban schools, which had typically been a somewhat miscellaneous collection of classrooms presided over by fairly autonomous masters and mistresses. Male teachers, especially, resisted being told what to do, as Horace Mann found when he criticized the Boston schoolmasters. By contrast, in the patriarchal society of mid-nineteenth century America, it was expected that women teachers would follow the lead of male supervisors.[31]

In its early forms, the graded school was predicated on a specified curriculum broken down by age-levels and taught by teachers who were to be carefully supervised. Children were to be taught step by step and advanced when they had passed the examination for their grade level. Many of the architects of the new order in urban schools pointed to the new factories as a partial model for the new-style school. The superintendent (male) or the principal (typically male in smaller systems, though often female in large ones headed by a male superintendent) was to ensure discipline in the system, thereby alleviating concern about whether women could control the older boys. Where women were hired as principals in urban systems, they typically worked in primary schools where they supervised only women. The parts of the system were to be fitted together with machine-like precision. As city normal classes in the high schools proliferated, chey trained young women in precisely the techniques and knowledge they needed as teachers.[32]

The sex-segregation of women in the lower grades of city schools, supervised by male managers, foreshadowed similar developments toward the end of the nineteenth century in other complex public and private institutions: nurses in hospitals, workers in libraries, clerical staff in big businesses, or saleswomen in large stores. These jobs were higher in status than proletarian factory work; they required respectable demeanor and (with the possible exception of salesworkers) sturdy cognitive skills; they demanded little pre-job training; they linked well with what were thought to be distinctively female interests and abilities; and they could be adapted to relatively high turnover when women married, since a stable cadre of male career administrators or professionals could remain securely in command.[33]

V

It was partly to solve the problems of continuity of control in an occupation chiefly populated by young and transient women that educators insisted that male teachers and administrators be retained in the city systems. In fact, male as well as female teachers showed high turnover rates, while some women made urban teaching a lifelong career. But the stereotype that men were "permanent" members of the work force and women only temporary led school boards to an assumption about the perceived managerial training costs: that they could decrease their overall management training costs (mainly the costs of having inexperienced managers) by hiring only men for the top jobs. In most urban systems it was expected or required that women employees resign when they married (even after 1940, when married women were hired to help alleviate the teacher shortage, they customarily left the occupation at least during the time when they raised small children).[34]

Men in urban systems, by contrast, had clear-cut career ladders that led into administration. They were expected to work full-time throughout their careers and to be ambitious for advancement. Thus they could demonstrate their loyalty and visibility. Marriage was not a source of difficult role conflicts between home demands and work for men but practically a contingency for advancement; male superintendents of schools, for example, have almost all been married, whereas the small contingent of prominent woman administrators have typically been single, widowed or divorced.[35]

Male career educators had important advantages in linking the schools to the community. Because of men's higher status in the culture and their

access to all-male community organizations, they could interact more easily than women with male power-wielders, socially and politically. And in an enterprise in which goals and measures of achievement were often diffuse and hard to assess, it was reassuring to have leaders whose social characteristics were of high repute. It is thus not surprising that superintendents were almost all male, middle-aged, white, Protestant, and experienced in education. This gave public schools a higher social credit rating. Within the system, the same status characteristics gave them an advantage in controlling their young, female subordinates, the teachers. Very few male teachers remained long in education, but for those who did, career ladders opened up in the urban schools.[36]

Educational associations also provided an important forum for male leaders, a place in which they could establish regional or even national reputations. A number of the educational associations founded in the middle of the nineteenth century -- like the NEA -- barred women at first. Some -- like Phi Delta Kappa -- remained all-male until very recent years. Founded in 1857, the NEA did not have a woman president until 1910, and did not elect a woman classroom teacher as president until 1928. State educational associations had much the same record of male dominance, even though women far outnumbered the men. A large proportion of the men who led both the state and national associations were administrators.[37]

But one way in which these male bosses blurred the real lines of power both in the educational associations and in the school systems they administered was by appealing to an ideology that supposedly linked leaders and led. In the mid-nineteenth century the dominant ideology was that of an evangelical Protestant mission to educate the youth of the republic.

We join forces, men and women, leaders and led, in a common cause, they argued, and women imbued with this evangelical conception of their task could join an educational movement led by men in much the same spirit in which they could join a Methodist church run by a male minister. Later the ideology of educational associations slowly shifted to a diffuse "professionalism" that decreed that we are all professionals together, superintendent and first-grade teacher. Whether religious or professional, such ideologies masked actual power relationships.[38]

Sometimes, however, important splits developed in the ranks of teacher organizations along the potential divide of gender. From their earliest days educational organizations debated whether men and women teachers should receive equal pay for equal work. They typically decided piously that they should but then ignored the actual disparities.[39] But when women in cities formed their own sex-segregated organizations to push for equal pay in the early twentieth century, men retaliated with ungallant zeal. Reversing the valence of the earlier stereotype of the nurturant mother-teacher, men complained that women teachers feminized the boys. Indeed, perhaps feeling vulnerable as scattered males in a crowd of women, male leaders often stressed their masculine qualities, especially their ability to conquer the bully boys in the rural schools -- a common theme in the autobiographies of male educators. As managers in education, men at the turn of the twentieth century often turned to business or the military for models for their work, just as their early predecessors had turned to the ministry for inspiration.[40]

Some women in urban schools formed militant all-female associations to push for equal pay, higher salaries, pensions, and other material

benefits. Urban school teaching was one of the best jobs open to women. It provided higher than average pay among the "professional" category of women's work, steady employment, and a respectable calling. But the pay and benefits were still scaled to the needs of young single women, not persons who wanted to make teaching a lifelong and self-supporting career. In addition, militant teachers in places like Chicago fought for their autonomy in the classroom and against centralization of decision-making in instruction and supervision. In the journals and records of these leaders can be found an eloquent sense of the common cause of women career teachers, a stifling sense of powerlessness they often experienced as schools became increasingly bureaucratized.[41]

VI

The effects of the feminization of teaching can be traced not only in the bureaucratization of urban schools or in the politics of professional associations. They are also obvious in the subordination of teachers to narrow standards of propriety imposed by local communities, especially in small-town America. Had mature men constituted a majority of the teaching profession, it is hard to imagine that school patrons would have insisted on such tight supervision of the morals and mores of teachers as they did for young women. Old-time rules governing the behavior of teachers now sound like humor from Mad Magazine. As Willard Waller has shown, such constraints were part and parcel of the notion that schools should be "museums of virtue" and their keepers paragons who exemplified "those moral principles which the majority more or less frankly disavow for

themselves but want others to practice; they are ideals for the helpless, ideals for children and for teachers."[42]

It was the single woman teacher, caught in a web of restrictive cultural expectations, who was most helpless to resist. Within the cellular classroom and her restricted social space outside, shielded by the patriarchal superintendent, women teachers were expected to exemplify and preach abstinence while community males smoked and drank, to create the impression that teachers reproduced by budding while seeing their sisters and brothers produce families by other means. While perhaps less strictly held to moral account than women, men teachers also were restricted by the female Victorian stereotypes at their job, much as a minister might be, and sometimes sought, like ministers, "to escape the stereotype...[by becoming] breezy, virile 'he-men.'"[43] Community supervision of the behavior of teachers both in and out of the classroom was more stringent, of course, in smaller communities than in pluralistic big cities, and in both types of setting teachers have gained considerably more autonomy than they had a half-century ago when Waller was writing.

VII

There have been important gender-related changes in educational employment since 1940, even though elementary school teaching has remained largely a woman's job. These new developments, like changes in the past, have been responses to supply and demand forces, shifting cultural values, organizational changes and changes in the family. Of particular importance have been the new acceptability of employment for married women, changing

configurations in educational institutions, and increasing militance and power of educators themselves, including new roles for teacher associations.

During most of those forty years there was an intense demand for teachers, at first because of the war and then because of increased enrollments caused by the great bulge of pupils following the baby boom and the greatly increased retention of high school students. The decline in births during the Depression of the 1930s, coupled with a high demand for both male and female workers in the largely prosperous generation following World War II, produced a labor shortage of the source of teachers most common in the past: single young women. The vast expansion of enrollments in higher education fueled by the G.I. Bill, produced a much larger proportion of college graduates than in any earlier generation of youth.[44]

At the same time, institutional changes in public education created different patterns of employment that attracted more men into teaching. The number of one-room schools plummeted from over 130,000 in 1940 to fewer than 1,000 in 1980, while the number of high school teachers more than tripled to over 1,000,000. The urban and suburban sector of the educational system expanded rapidly and increased in complexity of function and hierarchy, thereby creating multiple career ladders. Despite the shortage of teachers, educational associations lobbied for higher educational qualifications and helped to win greater pay for teachers. In the 1960s and 1970s teacher unions and associations became more militant and won important power in collective bargaining in most states.[45]

These intersecting changes helped to alter the characteristics of female teachers. By 1960 women teachers were no longer the young, unmarried, minimally educated people they had traditionally been: by then the median age was 44, the average term of service was 14.2, about 70 percent had four years of college, and only 29 percent were single. Their income of over $4000 was well above the median for women professionals and had increased in real dollars by over one-third during the 1950s. As happened in these years in a number of other sex-labeled fields, like secretarial work, public school employers retained married women as teachers and also dipped into the very large reserve labor pool of married women who had formerly taught. A large percentage of women teachers did drop out temporarily when their children were young, but they reentered the occupation later, creating a bi-modal age distribution among female teachers.[46]

Male teachers increased markedly in both elementary and secondary schools during the post-war years. The largest absolute gain of men was in high schools, where they grew from 103,293 in 1945-46 to 542,000 in 1978, a percentage growth of the total number from 35.7 to 54. But they also entered the elementary schools until they numbered 203,000, a percentage increase from 6.4 to 17 in those years. By 1978, men constituted almost 34 percent of all teachers, elementary and secondary combined.[47]

This striking increase in male teachers resulted from several forces. In the 1950s, there had been a concerted drive to attract more men into the secondary schools, the sector which was growing the fastest. The G.I. Bill had provided opportunities for lower-middle-class men -- the traditional pool from which male teachers were recruited -- to go to college.

And the rapid increase in the number of new administrative positions provided a carrot to aspiring young men.[48]

Men practically monopolized the most prestigious positions -- high school principal or superintendent -- as they typically did in the past, but in most other positions, including elementary principalships, they registered steady gains as well. Male administrators had slightly higher levels of education than women but they were younger and had less experience. Most men did not enter public school classrooms planning to remain there throughout their careers. Typically, they sought either to move into administration or to seek other work outside. As long as school systems continued their volcanic growth in the 1950s and 1960s, career ladders were abundant for the minority of ambitious men who stayed continuously in the profession. For women, however, the competing demands of family -- especially the need to tend young children -- interrupted their careers, and few planned to compete for administrative positions. The earlier cultural belief that woman's place was in the home was modified to allow married women to teach, but powerful stereotypes and institutional sexism still persisted.[49]

But not all men -- much less all women -- saw their advancement in the profession as requiring stepping into administration. During the 1960s and 1970s teacher militants changed the character of educational associations like the NEA, splitting teachers away from the administrators who had long held the upper hand, and demanded higher pay, more control over working conditions, and other forms of teacher power. Studies of the American Federation of Teachers and the NEA indicate that there was an important dimension of gender in this militance. In both cases men --

especially in urban junior high schools -- took the lead in mobilizing teachers. Alienated by demeaning regulations, convinced that their pay and status were incommensurate with opportunities available elsewhere to men of comparable education and experience, these teacher leaders articulated grievances, attracted other dissidents, and used techniques of organization borrowed from other unions and from the civil rights movement in order to press their case on administrators and school boards. The continuing teacher shortage together with strong tenure provisions gave teachers greater protection in their new-found posture of resistance. Teacher organizations also became a strong interest group in local, state, and national politics.[50]

In the last few years, of course, conditions have changed. Excessive enrollments in teacher education programs and declining numbers of students in public schools have produced teacher surpluses and layoffs in many parts of the country. Once aggressive, now many teacher leaders are on the defensive as jobs are eliminated and as citizens cut taxes. And, ironically, now that the women's movement has begun to make educators more aware of the nature of institutional sexism -- as illustrated, for example, in the grossly unequal distribution of managerial jobs -- the enterprise of public education is not expanding but declining.[51]

VIII

Our report, as we said, examines how gender has affected teaching (and administration) as an occupation. We explore this history partly in the hope that it may illuminate the sexual structuring of opportunity and hence

help set policies that will produce greater equity, however clouded may be the overall outlines of the future in education.

We close this report with a comment on our point of view towards studying the experience of women. In women's history in recent years there have been several approaches. One has lamented the exclusion of women from the writing of mainstream history and has attempted to remedy that oversight by talking about heroines who were there along with the heroes. This contributionist approach -- popular now in high school textbooks -- is better than nothing, but it is generally not very analytic. More interesting, but partly flawed, is another approach that portrays women as victims, usually of the actions and beliefs of men. This takes a step toward understanding structure but tends to downplay the attitudes and agency of the women themselves and may present a rather wooden interpretation of patriarchy and inequality. Ralph Waldo Emerson's much-admired aunt, Mary Moody Emerson, who managed to educate herself and those around her magnificently amid the press of household toil, once wrote in her diary: "There is a secret pleasure in bending to circumstances while superior to them."[52] Many women who were apparent "victims of circumstance" constructed lives of great dignity. A number of recent scholars, whose work we admire, have gone beyond heroines or victims to attempt a woman-centered history which seeks to explore the relationships between women themselves -- how they supported one another, how they gave meaning to their lives, how they attempted to change their lives. This seems to us a fruitful approach, provided one keeps in mind the particular institutions and the broader social structure within which these relationships take shape.[53]

We accept all three approaches as partially useful. Women teachers did contribute enormously to public education, and some were genuine culture heroes. Women teachers were victims -- paid tiny wages, channeled by prim cultural values, and denied access to advancement in the system. Women teachers, especially in the seminaries and in city teachers' associations, did create bonds of sisterhood and did act collectively in some of the most impressive forms of militance that women achieved. But what we wish to stress in this study is the sexual structuring of society, and particularly of the public school, within which both women and men teachers in systematic ways plied their craft and lived their lives. We hope that a clearer understanding of the roots and dynamics of gender inequality in educational employment will hasten its demise.

Footnotes

1. For a perceptive discussion of how gender structures society, see Joan Kelly-Gadol, "The Social Relation of the Sexes: Methodological Implications of Women's History," Signs, 1 (Summer 1976), 809-823.
2. For a discussion of the feminization of teaching, see Myra H. Strober and Laura Best, "The Female/Male Salary Differential in Public Schools: Some Lessons from San Francisco, 1879," Economic Inquiry 17, (April 1979), 218-236; Valerie K. Oppenheimer, The Female Labor Force in the United States: Demographic Factors Governing Growth and Changing Composition (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1970); and Valerie K. Oppenheimer, "The Sex-Labeling of Jobs," Industrial Relations 3 (May 1968), 224-228. For several analyses of occupational segregation by sex, see Martha Blaxall and Barbara Reagan (Eds.), Women and the Workplace: The Implications of Occupational Segregation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), especially Francine D. Blau and Carol L. Jusenius, "Economists' Approaches to Sex Segmentation in the Labor Market: An Appraisal," 181-200; and Myra H. Strober, "Toward Dimorphics: A Summary Statement to the Conference on Occupational Segregation," 293-302.
3. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Work and Family in the United States: A Critical Review and Agenda for Research and Policy (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1977); Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott, Women, Work, and Family (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978).
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7. The two major sources of statistics on teachers by sex are the annual or biennial reports of the U.S. Commissioner of Education and the decennial Census reports; for a concise discussion of Census data on teachers, see John K. Folger and Charles B. Nam, Education of the American Population (1960 Census Monograph, Washington D.C.: GPO, 1967), ch. iii.

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9. Catharine Beecher, The Evils Suffered by American Women and American Children: The Causes and the Remedy (New York: Harper & Bros., 1846).

10. Woody, Education of Women, I, Chs. iii-ix; Richard Bernard and Maris Vinovskis, "The Female School Teacher in Ante-Bellum Massachusetts," Journal of Social History, 10 (Spring 1977), 332-45; Maris Vinovskis and Richard Bernard, "Beyond Catharine Beecher: Female Education in the Antebellum Period," Signs 3 (Summer 1978), 856-69. For the concept of the "cellular" classroom, see Daniel Lortie, Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

11. Sklar, Beecher; Diane Lande, "Angels and Amazons: Women Teaching in Nineteenth Century Massachusetts," Senior Honors Thesis, Sociology, Harvard University, 1977: Anne Firor Scott, "The Ever Widening Circle: The Diffusion of Feminist Values from the Troy Female Seminary, 1822-1872," History of Education Quarterly, 18 (Spring 1979), 3-25; Keith Melder, "Training Women Teachers: Private Experiments," AERA paper, 1979.

12. Cott, Bonds, chs. i, iii; Thomas Dublin, Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), ch. i.

13. Dublin, Women at Work, ch. iii; David Allmendinger, "Mt. Holyoke Students Encounter the Need for Life-Planning, 1837-1850," History of Education Quarterly, 18 (Spring 1979), 27-31.

14. Michael Katz, The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 56-58; Woody, Women's Education, I, ch. x; for a comparison with Canada, see Alison Prentice, "The Feminization of Teaching in British North America, 1845-1875," Histoire Sociale/Social History, (May 1975), 50-75.

15. The statements that follow are based on quantitative studies we are conducting based on statistics reported by states for 1850 and on statistics reported by the U.S. Commissioner of Education beginning in 1870.

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22. National Education Association, Report of the Committee on Salaries, Tenure, and Pensions of Public School Teachers of the United States (Winona, Minn.: NEA, 1905), 125.

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28. Thomas Morain, "The Entry of Women into the School Teacher Profession in Nineteenth Century Iowa," unpublished paper, Iowa State University, 1977.

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35. David Tyack, "Pilgrim's Progress: Toward a Social History of the Superintendency," History of Education Quarterly 32 (Fall 1976), 263-67.

36. Lortie, Schoolteacher; Tyack, "Pilgrim's Progress."

37. Corinne L. Gilb, Hidden Hierarchies: The Professions and Government (New York: Harper & Row, 1966) explores the role of such inner networks in professional associations, including those in education.

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RELATED WRITINGS RESULTING FROM THE PROJECT

Myra Strober and Laura Best, "The Female-Male Salary Differential in Public Schools: Some Lessons from San Francisco, 1879," Economic Inquiry, 17 (1979), 218-36.

Audri Gordon, "A Dynamic Analysis of the Sexual Composition of Public School Teaching, 1870-1970," Ph.D. dissertation, Sociology, Stanford University, 1980.

David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, "Was There Ever a Golden Age for Women School Administrators?" submitted to Educational Administration Quarterly, 1981.